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LSSSE Law School Survey of Student Engagement



2009 Annual Survey Results

Student Engagement in Law School: Enhancing Student Learning



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The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) documents dimensions of quality in legal education and provides information about law student participation in effective educational activities that law schools and other organizations can use to improve student learning.

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LSSSE Law School Participation Agreement

In a given administration year, participating law schools agree to the following:

- LSSSE staff will use the LSSSE data in aggregate for national reporting purposes and other legal education initiatives (e.g., scholarly papers). LSSSE may also make data in which individual schools cannot be separately identified available to researchers in studying the law school experience.
- Your school may use your own LSSSE data for institutional purposes.
- LSSSE results specific to each law school and identified as such will not be made public by LSSSE except by mutual agreement between LSSSE and the law school.



The *Message from LSSSE* that follows reminds us that the fiscal hardship of the past year has not spared any sector of the economy, including law schools and the legal profession. As a result, there is a sense that legal education may be at a crossroads, though whether any long-term, profound changes are in the offing remains to be seen.

That said, LSSSE is at something of a crossroads itself as Chancellor's Professor George D. Kuh recently announced his intention to step down as director of the project. Under Dr. Kuh's able leadership, LSSSE has steadily grown not only in the number of schools participating but also in the breadth of its vision and the scope of its ambitions. So, it seems the right time to reflect on where LSSSE has been, what it has accomplished so far, and what may lie in its future.

In 2003, LSSSE began pilot testing to prepare for the national administration of a survey on law student engagement. The survey was designed in part to supplement accreditation reviews, which occurred infrequently and did not focus on specific educational processes taking place inside and outside the classroom. From the beginning, LSSSE sought to give a balanced picture of the strengths and limitations of legal education from the perspective of its consumers, law students.

LSSSE has offered useful information to individual schools, but it also uses annual reports like this one to discuss general trends and concerns. From the outset, some law school dynamics have been singled out for special attention. These relate to the classroom experience, relationships between faculty and students, co-curricular activities, social interactions among peers, the impact of diversity, and the patterns of engagement from the first to the third year of law study.

Now, with reports covering the period from 2004 to 2009, some recurring themes have emerged. By and large, law students report very high levels of satisfaction with their law school experiences, and the overwhelming majority would choose to go to the same school again. The 2004 annual report indicated that 82% of law students rated their law school experience as good or excellent, and 79% would probably or definitely attend the same school. The 2007 report showed that students at the most selective schools were the most satisfied and the most inclined to pick a school again. However, even at less selective institutions, well over 70% of students thought that they had a good or excellent experience, and nearly 70% would select the same school again if given the chance.

This is the good news. Yet, LSSSE also highlights areas in which there is room for improvement. For example, the current report addresses the importance of feedback from professors. In 2006, the annual report indicated that feedback correlated with increased gains in the ability to synthesize and apply concepts and ideas. Students who got prompt feedback spent more time preparing for class and worked harder to meet faculty expectations. A sense that professors were more available was linked to more positive views about the overall law school experience. This year's report once again finds that feedback is critical to effective learning, but the analysis also reveals a gender gap that deserves further attention. In particular, male students are notably more likely to get oral feedback during and outside class than female students do, though the reasons for the disparity are not entirely clear.

In addition, this year's report offers findings on the role of co-curricular activities in the law school experience. The 2004 annual report found that African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Latinos were more likely than their classmates to get involved. The 2005 report again found higher participation rates for African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Latinos as well as for multiracial students. In 2006, LSSSE described impressive rates of participation, in excess of 70%, for all students, regardless of race or ethnicity or year in law school. African Americans and Latinos, however, remained especially likely to participate and to assume a leading role in student organizations. Indeed, these results bolster the United States Supreme Court's conclusion in *Grutter v. Bollinger*¹ that diversity in law schools is important in building pathways to leadership for historically underrepresented groups.

This year's findings suggest that the reasons for becoming involved in law-related co-curricular activities change over the course of a law student's career. First-year students see membership as a way to make friends and feel connected to the school, while second-years view participation as helpful in obtaining a job. Students report making progress in a number of professional, academic, and social areas as a result of these activities, and students who are uninvolved appear to be at risk for other forms of disengagement, including studying less, contributing less to class discussions, and having less contact with peers. The contributions of co-curricular activities suggest that there is a real synergy—rather than a trade-off or conflict—between the academic and social aspects of law school.



The 2009 findings continue to track the rising debt load for law students. Although the sample of participating schools has changed over the years, the high cost of going to law school remains a constant in each year's report. This year, the proportion of students expecting to graduate with over \$120,000 in debt has increased yet again. In 2006, 18% of students at surveyed schools anticipated this kind of burden, but by 2009, 29% did. The increase was attributable in large part to dramatic increases in the proportion of students with high debt loads at public law schools.

In this brief *Foreword*, I cannot do complete justice to the rich array of research findings that LSSSE has produced over the years. Past reports have described the intense engagement of first-year students and the relative disengagement of third-years, the place of ethical instruction in law schools, and the impact of

faculty increases, student engagement overall decreases.³ Monitoring LSSSE results over the coming years will allow us to see if the pattern is similar for law schools.

As another example, the General Accounting Office (GAO) recently released a report on the rising costs of legal education.⁴ The report concludes that declining state support for public law schools and increasing competition for high rankings, rather than accreditation standards, are the principal causes of the growing expense. The GAO also discusses the impact of escalating tuition and fees on access for minority students. Yet, nowhere does the analysis address the potential tax on all students that comes from attending law school in the shadow of an ever burgeoning debt load. LSSSE can enlarge the policy framework through its systematic collection of data on this question.

"From the beginning, LSSSE sought to give a balanced picture of the strengths and limitations of legal education."

legal writing and skills training. These data have a role to play in the debates surrounding the future of legal education. So far, LSSSE has focused primarily on providing individual profiles to participating law schools so that they can improve their programs and services, and it has created ways for these schools to incorporate this information into the accreditation process.

But there is more that can be done with this valuable information. For instance, the American Bar Association's Council on Legal Education is now contemplating changes in the accreditation standards that would permit law schools to make greater use of part-time faculty than is currently the case.² LSSSE's findings on the importance of systematic feedback and ongoing contact with professors are of potential relevance here. If part-time faculty members are less likely to be available to students on a regular basis, how will this shift in policy affect the learning process and student engagement? At the undergraduate level, some studies show that as the percentage of part-time

We are grateful to Dr. Kuh for guiding LSSSE's evolution from a fledgling pilot survey into a respected and authoritative source of empirical data on legal education. LSSSE will miss his wealth of experience and considered judgment. My hope is that Dr. Kuh's successor, working alongside LSSSE's superb project manager, Lindsay Watkins, will build on these impressive accomplishments. Besides continuing a tradition of high-quality survey research, LSSSE's new director ideally will find even more ways to do outreach, forge partnerships, and disseminate important findings. These steps will enable LSSSE to serve as a guidepost in efforts to ensure that legal education does not take a wrong turn at the crossroads it may be facing.

Rachel F. Moran

Robert D. and Leslie-Kay Raven Professor, Berkeley Law School, and Founding Faculty, UC Irvine School of Law

^{1 539} U.S. 306 (2003).

² See Memorandum to Interested Persons and Entities from Hulett H. Askew, Consultant on Legal Education, and Richard J. Morgan, Chair, Standards Review Committee re: "Proposed Deletions of Interpretations 402-1 of the ABA Standards for the Approval of Law Schools" dated August 2008; Letter to ABA Council of the Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar from the Clinical Legal Education Association dated Dec. 11, 2008; Letter to Standards Review Committee from the American Law Deans Association re: "Interpretations 402-1 and 402-2" dated December 8, 2008.

³ See George D. Kuh et. al., Why teacher-scholars matter: Some insights from FSSE and NSSE, Liberal Educ., 93(4), 40–45 (2007); Paul D. Umbach, How effective are they? Exploring the impact of contingent faculty on undergraduate education, Rev. of Higher Educ., 30(2), 91–123 (2007); Paul D. Umbach & Matthew R. Wawrzynski, Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement, Res. in Higher Educ. 46(2), 153–184 (2007).

⁴ General Accounting Office, Higher Education: Issues Related to Law School Cost and Access (GAO 10-20) (Oct. 2009).



The events of the past year have been challenging for nearly every sector of the economy, in the US and around the world. The legal profession has not been spared. Law students are feeling the effects of these changes, and legal educators are finding ways to respond to the shifting tides through innovation and improvement in programming and pedagogy.

A first step toward improvement is a candid assessment of the quality of legal education students receive. As law schools adapt to inevitable changes in the legal profession, legal educators will benefit from a better understanding of what students do in law school, what students feel they gain from their legal education, and the role the law school plays in shaping students' professional development. Data from LSSSE can help, as the results typically provide an informative window into the student experience that raises questions which require additional study and understanding.

Law schools around the country are administering LSSSE to learn more about law school from the student perspective. Since its launch in 2003, 157 different law schools have participated in the project. In 2009 more than 26,000 law students from 82 schools responded to the survey. The aggregated results now include data from more than 146,000 law students, making the LSSSE database a valuable resource for legal educators. Armed with information about the nature of student experiences linked to high performance and desirable learning outcomes, law school faculty and staff will be better prepared to consider ways to improve the quality of education law students receive. By knowing more about what works, legal educators will be better able to use law school resources inside and outside the classroom to better prepare students for the practice of law.

No one can predict how legal education will change in the coming years, but we can be certain that change is coming. Law schools appear to be increasing their emphasis on professional and ethical training in response to recent calls from scholars and practitioners. More offerings in such practice-oriented experiences as clinics, pro bono opportunities, and externships provide students with valuable skills and competencies demanded by the practice of law. As law schools introduce curricular and programmatic innovations, data from LSSSE can help evaluate the effects of these efforts.

The 2009 Survey Results

The foundation of legal education is the classroom. This is where law students are challenged to develop the critical thinking and analytical skills that will take them from Hawkins v. McGee to the bar exam and beyond. The feedback that students receive from professors helps shape their skills and guide their progress. To better understand how feedback contributes to students' academic and professional development, LSSSE added questions to the core questionnaire about the frequency with which students receive prompt feedback. For example, we asked students how often they received feedback from instructors that helped them understand core concepts, individual cases and holdings, and develop a comprehensive view of the course. In general, students were only lukewarm about the helpfulness of feedback they received, suggesting there is room for improvement in the frequency and manner with which professors share their evaluations of student performance. Because LSSSE data indicate that professorial feedback is linked to higher student gains in a host of areas, we also investigated whether certain subpopulations of students were more likely to receive such feedback, and thus be advantaged compared with their peers. The findings show that although all students report satisfactory relations with faculty, male students are more likely to receive feedback from professors both during class and outside of class. Why such a difference exists warrants further investigation.

Valuable learning opportunities also exist outside the classroom. Involvement in co-curricular activities provides students with important opportunities to practice their skills and develop a professional ethic that will serve them throughout their careers. We also know that students who engage in these types of activities during law school—student groups, moot court, pro bono activities, clerkships, externships—report greater gains in their academic and personal development. This year we asked students to tell us why they get involved in such activities or, conversely, what prevents them from taking part in such activities. Students who do not take part in such activities are also less likely to engage in other important aspects of their educational experience as well as being more likely to come to class unprepared. While it is not possible to determine from LSSSE data whether co-curricular involvements are causally related to greater engagement in other educationally purposeful activities, legal educators would do well to encourage students to consider finding ways to connect with such opportunities as they independently contribute to desired outcomes.



Preparation for practice is a critical component of legal education. As students learn to think like lawyers, so should they develop professionally as they prepare to join the bar. In 2008 and 2009, LSSSE asked a subset of law students to reflect on which settings and activities were most effective in fostering their professional ethical development, and how their legal education contributed to deepening their capacity for moral reasoning and acting with integrity in personal and professional settings. In this year's report we point out that that in 2009, students indicated more attention was being paid to these areas. Students also devoted more effort in 2009 to activities associated with professional and ethical development in 2009 as compared with the previous year.

As we expected given the current employment climate, fewer students expect to work in private law firms this year, while more students anticipate seeking a public service job following graduation. To learn more about students' career plans, we looked at how their expected settings differed by the amount of incurred law school debt. Somewhat surprisingly, students with more debt were not necessarily more likely to see themselves in high-paying positions with private firms. The amount of law school debt did not seem to affect students' choices to enter traditionally lower paying fields like public interest law or government service.

The LSSSE project owes thanks to its many contributors. Our national advisory board provides us with excellent guidance as we seek to generate high-quality data that are usable by and useful for the legal education community. As a collaborative effort, we benefit from the expertise of Indiana University's Center for Survey Research which expertly administers the Web-based questionnaire each year.

LSSSE is thriving because of the dedication of the many law schools that participate each year to documenting and improving the law student experience. We continue to welcome your thoughts on this report and your suggestions for ways LSSSE can contribute to the national conversation about quality and improvement in legal education.

Lindsay Watkins
LSSSE Project Manager
Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research



Survey

Administered to all students at participating law schools via the Web. Supported by institutional participation fees. Completion time is about 15 minutes.

Objectives

Provide data to law schools to improve legal education, enhance student success, inform accreditation efforts, and facilitate benchmarking efforts.

Partners

Co-sponsored by the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Participating Law Schools

One hundred and fifty-seven different law schools have participated in LSSSE since 2003.

Respondents and Response Rates

In 2009, more than 26,000 law students responded to the LSSSE survey. The average institutional response rate was 53%.

Audiences

Law school administrators and faculty, advisory boards, trustees, prospective students, institutional researchers, accreditors, higher education scholars, and college and university counselors.

Data Sources

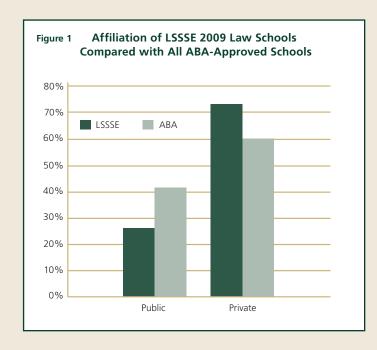
JD/LLB students from participating law schools across the United States and Canada. Supplemental information comes from the American Bar Association and the Law School Admission Council.

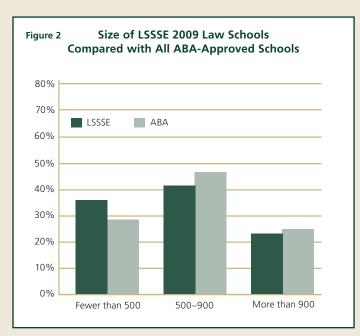
Cost

Participation fees range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 as determined by student enrollment.

Participation Agreement

Participating law schools agree that LSSSE will use the aggregated data for national reporting purposes and other legal education initiatives. Law schools may use their own data for institutional purposes. Results specific to a law school, and identified as such, will not be made public except by mutual agreement between the schools and LSSSE.







The Law School Survey of Student Engagement focuses on activities that affect learning in law school. The results show how law students use their time, what they think about their legal training, and what law schools can do to improve engagement and learning.

The selected results reported in this section are based on responses from 26,641 law students at 82 law schools who completed LSSSE in spring 2009. We also draw upon several sets of experimental questions appended to the survey for a subset of the 2009 respondents. Three themes are featured.

First, we take an in-depth look at the nature of faculty feedback to students inside and outside of the classroom in *Another Look at Faculty Feedback*. Feedback from instructors plays an important role in student motivation and academic development. While the frequency with which students receive comments about their performance is important, equally valuable is the nature of the feedback. We asked students to report on the type of feedback professors provide and the relationships between feedback and students' professional development, acquisition of legal skills such as legal reasoning and writing, and understanding of course concepts.

In the next section, *Beyond the Classroom*, we explore the connections between students' out-of-class activities and their academic and professional development. We report what motivates different types of students to participate in law school organizations and activities, and what prevents others from taking part. We learn more about how various types of students benefit in different ways from these activities with special focus on co-curricular involvement.

Finally we examine the effects of the recession on students' professional goals and expectations in *Legal Education in a Changing World*. We also look at ethical and professional training in law schools to assess the impact of recent events on legal education.

Promising Findings

• More than three-fourths of 1Ls (81%) spend more than 20 hours a week reading and preparing for class. Fewer 3Ls (54%) report the same.

Time plus energy equals learning. (Dessem, 1999)

 Four out of five law students say they would probably or definitely choose the same law school again.

Law school is expensive and becoming more so each year, making the choice of where to go often the biggest investment decision an applicant has made in his or her life. (Henderson & Morris, 2008)

• Almost two-thirds of all students (62%) report that they frequently have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity; two-thirds (66%) frequently have such interactions with students who differ in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values.

Cooperative learning enriches traditional law school education...with a culturally based, highly relational exploration of course material. (Dominguez, 1999)

 Half of all students report that their law school places a substantial (combination of response options "Quite a bit" and "Very much") emphasis on preparing students to handle the stresses of law practice.

A law school shall maintain an educational program that prepares its students to address current and anticipated legal problems. (ABA Standards for Accreditation, Interpretation 301-1)

• Nearly eighty percent (79%) of law students feel that their instructors care about them as individuals.

If we are to improve the quality of student learning in law, [...] teachers of law must address, and respond to, their students as individuals. (LeBrun & Johnstone, 1994)



 Almost two-thirds (63%) of 3Ls report having done pro bono or volunteer work during law school. Seventy percent of third-years have participated in clinical internships or field experiences. During the third year, 40% of all students spend some time during the week working for pay in a legal setting.

The existing common core of legal education needs to be expanded to provide students substantial experience with practice. (Sullivan et. al., 2007)

 Three-fifths of all students (61%) report that their legal education substantially contributes to their acquisition of job or work-related knowledge or skills. More than three-fourths of all students (77%) feel that their law school places a substantial emphasis on encouraging the ethical practice of law.

> Legal education will be most effective if we can either build on students' existing interests and their motivations for attending law school, or assist them in creating visions of a rewarding future in law. (Maranville, 2001)

Disappointing Findings

- Nearly one-third of all students report that they never discuss ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class.
- More than one-third of all students say that their legal education places little emphasis on acting with integrity in personal and professional settings.
- Fourteen percent of students report *never* receiving prompt feedback from faculty members about their academic performance.
- In the third year, more than one quarter of students (26%) frequently come to class without completing readings or assignments.
- While 78% of non-transfer students report positive relationships with their classmates, only 60% of transfer students report the same.
- More than one-third (44%) of 3Ls expect to owe more than \$100,000 in law school loans upon graduation.
- One in ten students report that they never discuss ethical issues embedded in a case during doctrinal classes.
- One quarter of 3Ls (27%) frequently come to class without completing the readings.

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement focuses on activities that affect learning in law schools.



Feedback helps "steer students as they absorb what they are being taught, and as they attempt to express their new knowledge" (LeClerq, 418). In 2009 LSSSE asked a subset of law students about the nature of the feedback they received from professors. Because educational research shows that feedback is an effective educational practice, we added some questions to the 2009 LSSSE to more closely examine this aspect of the law school experience.

Unfortunately, it seems that the traditional law school curriculum does little to facilitate substantive interactions between law students and their professors about students' academic progress and performance. As noted in the Carnegie report *Educating Lawyers*, legal education tends to be highly focused on such high-stakes summative assessments as end-of-course exams, often resulting in little emphasis on the prompt, regular feedback that will help students develop the skills and competencies needed to be effective legal practitioners. Knowing more about the nature of feedback that law students *do* receive from professors could be helpful to legal educators in taking steps to improve this important pedagogical technique.

Interacting with Professors

Only half of all students report that they frequently receive prompt feedback from professors ("Frequent" combines response options "Often" and "Very often") (Table 1). Understandably, full-time students are more likely than their part-time classmates to receive frequent feedback and to have close relationships with professors. On balance, male students are more likely to receive frequent oral feedback on questions or comments than their female classmates both during class and outside of class. Male students also are more likely to meet individually with professors to discuss course concepts and slightly more likely to ask questions during class. Notably, male and female students are similar in terms of receiving written feedback on assignments. Because there is a significant correlation between feedback and student gains in a host of areas (Table 2), it would be wise to determine the factors that may be problematic in terms of female law students contributing to class discussion and interacting with faculty. Fortunately, the frequency of professorial feedback did not vary according to student race or ethnicity.

Table 1 Percentage of Students Receiving Frequent^a Feedback by Gender

Percentage of students who <u>frequently</u> receive feedback	Male	Female
Written feedback on an assignment	49%	47%
Oral feedback during class about questions or comments you raised during discussion	61%	52%
Oral feedback outside of class about questions or comments you raised during discussion	30%	24%

Percentage of students who never receive feedback

Written feedback on an assignment	12%	9%
Oral feedback during class about questions or comments you raised during discussion	7%	11%
Oral feedback outside of class about questions or comments you raised during discussion	28%	37%

^a Includes those students who responded "Often" or "Very often."

Table 2 Relationship Between Feedback and Self-Reported Gains in Select Areas

Self-Reported Gains	Written comments on an assignment	Oral feedback during class	Oral feedback outside of class
Acquiring job- or work- related knowledge or skills	++	++	++
Writing clearly and effectively	++	++	++
Speaking clearly and effectively	++	++	++
Thinking critically and analytically	++	++	++
Working effectively with others	++	++	+++
Solving complex real-world problems	++	+++	+++
Developing clearer career goals	++	++	+++
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	++	++	+++
Contributing to the welfare of your community	++	++	++
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience?	++	+++	++

Correlation coefficients are reported at the following levels: + indicates r>.1, ++ indicates r>.2, +++ indicates r>.3

It is heartening that most students report positive relationships with their instructors. Eighty-three percent of all students say they feel comfortable approaching instructors to discuss course concepts. And while fewer students say the same about asking their professors for advice and guidance (63%), more than three quarters of students (77%) report that their professors care about them as individuals. These results are promising, as students who report positive relationships with their professors report better gains in a host of areas, including critical thinking, speaking, and writing skills, and acquiring a broad legal education.

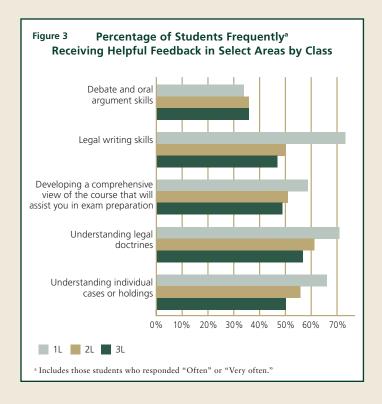
Receiving Helpful Feedback

To what extent do students find feedback from faculty to be helpful? About half of all students say that they frequently receive helpful feedback. More specifically:

- About half of 2Ls and 3Ls (55% and 50% respectively) say that they frequently receive feedback that helped clarify individual cases or holdings.
- Slightly more than half of second- and third-years (61% and 56%, respectively) report frequently receiving feedback that helps them understand legal doctrine.
- Only about one-third of all students feel that they frequently receive commentary that has a positive influence on their debate and oral argument skills.
- About half of all students feel that they frequently receive input from professors that helps them develop a more comprehensive view of the course.
- 1Ls are more likely than upperclassmen to report that they frequently receive feedback that is helpful to their academic development.

These results suggest several questions that legal educators might ponder. Do students get enough information from their teachers about their academic performance to direct their efforts to areas where improvement is needed? Are students adequately supported in their academic progress? Do certain areas of student development require more directed guidance from professors so that students have an adequate foundation upon which to build new skills? Are certain kinds of feedback more effective and

helpful at different points during the law school experience? For example, what type of feedback is most helpful and appropriate for 2L and 3L students who have more experience in case briefing and analysis than their 1L counterparts?



As one might expect, students at smaller law schools (fewer than 500 students) are more likely than their peers at larger law schools to meet individually with professors to discuss course concepts and to receive frequent oral feedback from instructors. These students also are the most likely to report that feedback from professors helped further their academic development in key areas (Figure 4). Despite such helpful interactions, students at smaller law schools receive written feedback from professors less frequently than students at larger schools.

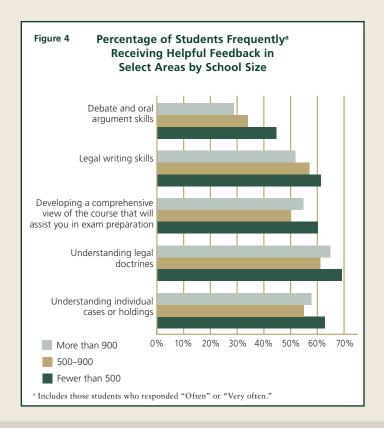
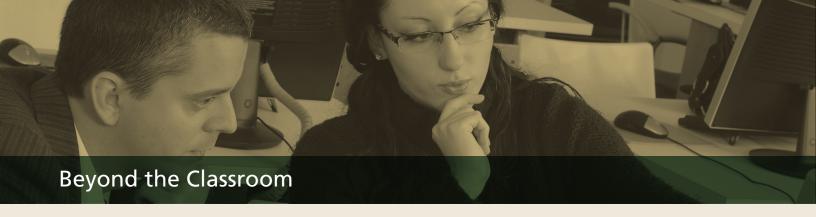


Table 3 Percentage of Students Receiving Feedback in Select Areas by Frequency		
	Never	Frequently
Received feedback that stimulated interest in the study of law	9%	57%
Received feedback that stimulated interest in the practice of law	9%	56%

As one might expect, students who volunteer or do pro bono work and those who participate in clinics or internships are more likely than other students to receive feedback that helps further their interest in law practice. Although 83% of students report that they feel comfortable approaching instructors to discuss concepts and issues, and the average student meets individually with professors at least once a month, results suggest that conversations between students and professors might not go far enough in emphasizing the practice-related issues inherent in legal study.

Students who report positive relationships with their professors report better gains in a variety of areas.

Law faculty also may want to consider their role in shaping students' views of the legal profession. About half of all students report that they frequently receive feedback from professors that stimulates their interest in the practice of law. Meanwhile, nearly one in ten students said that they *never* receive feedback that further stimulates their interest in law practice (Table 3). What more can we do to engage the 10% of students who do not currently receive feedback that promotes professional reflection?



Doctrinal training in legal education is indispensable, but essential skills and competencies are acquired through out-of-class experiences as well. In this section, we take a close look at student participation in co-curricular activities during law school to discover the factors that either enable students to take part in these activities or prevent them from doing so. We also are interested in how students benefit from their involvement.

Getting Involved

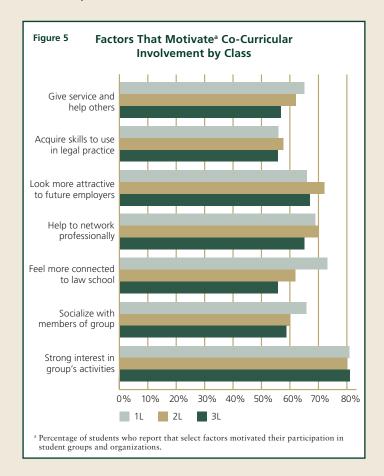
A majority of law students participate in co-curricular activities like school-related student groups or organizations, but their reasons for getting involved in such activities differ. First-year students, for example, were more likely to join student groups in order to socialize with other students in the group and to feel connected to the law school. Meanwhile, 2Ls were more likely to get involved in order to look more attractive to future employers (Figure 5).

Most students who elect not to participate in student groups or organizations report that they feel unable to do so because academic coursework takes priority. Unsurprisingly, 1Ls are more likely than upperclassmen to cite that academics take precedence over such activities. Second- and third-year students who choose not to participate are more likely to cite work or family obligations, along with relaxing and socializing, as reasons not to get involved in student groups.

Benefits of Involvement

One finding that warrants attention is that students who do not engage in co-curricular activities are also more likely than their classmates to come to class *unprepared*. Uninvolved students also spend less time studying and preparing for class. In addition, these students are significantly less likely than participating students to:

- Contribute to class discussions
- Integrate ideas or information from various sources or different courses
- Include diverse perspectives in class discussions and assignments
- Work with classmates outside of class
- Work harder to meet faculty standards
- Discuss ideas from classes with others outside of class, and
- Have serious conversations with students of a different race/ ethnicity or those with different values and beliefs





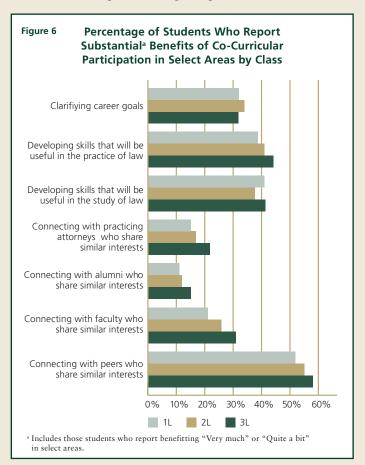
Students who do participate in co-curricular activities report gaining more in a variety of desired outcome areas compared with their peers who do not participate (Table 4). Involved students also are significantly more likely than their peers to report positive relationships with classmates, faculty, and administrators. They also are more satisfied with their law school experience than other students.

Table 4 Relationship Between Self-Reported Gains and Participation in Co-Curricular Activities^a

Self-Reported Gains	Sig. ^b
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	+++
Speaking clearly and effectively	+++
Thinking critically and analytically	++
Understanding oneself	+
Working effectively with others	+++
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	+++
Developing clearer career goals	+++
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	+
Contributing to the welfare of the community	+++
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	+

^a Co-curricular activities include law school-related student groups and organizations.

According to students, the most valued benefit of co-curricular participation is the opportunity to connect with peers who share similar interests. Development of skills useful in the practice and study of law are also highly valued (Figure 6). Although about two-thirds of students became involved in student groups in order to look more attractive to employers, relatively few (about 20%) report that connecting with practicing attorneys was a beneficial aspect of their participation.



According to students, the most valued benefit of co-curricular participation is the opportunity to connect with peers who share similar interests.

^b + p<.05, ++ p<.01, +++ p<.001



Students graduating from law school in 2009 faced a very different employment landscape than those graduating just a year prior. As the economy struggled to pull itself out of a tailspin, law firms across the country responded by hiring fewer recent graduates as well as deferring start dates for new associates. The legal profession is undergoing change, and law students are feeling the effects of these unanticipated changes.

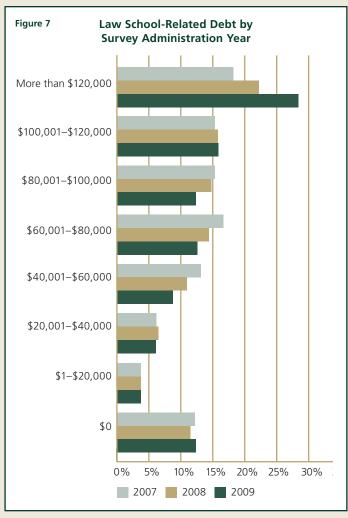
Professional Expectations

LSSSE data show that the percentage of law students at U.S. law schools who expect to work for private firms following graduation has fallen slightly. From 2006 to 2008, each year about 58% of all students reported that they expected to work in private law firms upon graduation. In 2009, this number shrank to 50% of students. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who expect to work in various government or public service settings is on the rise. While public interest law accounted for about 29% of students' professional expectations during each of the past three years, this percentage rose to 33% of students in 2009. Students may be adjusting their career expectations to better suit the current professional landscape. It seems certain that fewer new lawyers will land high-paying jobs with private firms in coming years.

Law School Debt

Meanwhile, students continue to accumulate more and more debt related to their legal education. The percentage of full-time U.S. students expecting to graduate owing more than \$120,000 is up notably in 2009 from prior years. In 2006, 2007, and 2008, the percentage of students expecting to owe more than \$120,000 at graduation rose gradually each year. For example in 2006, 18% of students fell into this category. In 2007 the percentage rose to 19%, and 23% in 2008. This past year saw a 6% increase; in 2009, 29% of students expect to graduate with this level of debt (Figure 7).

While we might anticipate that rising debt will alter students' job choices after graduation, results indicate that students' career expectations do not change based on anticipated debt levels (Table 5). In 2009 third-year students with substantial law school debt report being just as likely to expect to work in various public interest settings compared with 3Ls with little or no law school debt. Similarly, level of debt is not related to students' expectations to work in private law firms. On the



one hand, it is reassuring that anticipated debt levels do not seem to affect what students expect to do after completing their law degrees. On the other hand, LSSSE findings do not provide any insight into whether or how long students with higher debt loads remain in public service after the bar exam.

Professional and Ethical Training

In 2008 and 2009, we asked a subset of respondents to answer questions related to the ethical and professional training they received during law school. The results include responses from 7,021 law students at 24 U.S. law schools in 2008 and 4,855 students at 18 U.S. law schools in 2009. The data suggest that as law firms scaled back hiring and other legal organizations grappled with budget cuts, many law students reflected on important professional aspects of their legal training.



Table 5 Percentage of 3Ls at U.S. Law Schools Expecting to Work in Select Settings by Amount of Law School-Related Debt

	Public interest ^a	Private law firms ^b
\$0	27%	52%
\$1–20,000	31%	46%
\$20,001-40,000	33%	49%
\$40,001–60,000	31%	50%
\$60,001-80,000	31%	51%
\$80,001–100,000	35%	46%
\$100,001-\$120,000	34%	51%
\$120,001 +	32%	49%

^a Combines the following response options: government agency, judicial clerkship, legislative office, military, prosecutor's office, public defender's office, public interest law.

For example:

- In 2009, students were more likely to reflect frequently on their ethical and professional responsibilities than during the previous year.
- 63% of 2009 respondents reported that their experience in law school contributed substantially to their ability to act with integrity in personal and professional settings. In 2008, 58% of law students reported the same.

- Students were more likely to report that law school substantially strengthened their commitment to serving the public good in 2009 than during the previous year.
- In 2009, students were more likely to report that their legal education had prepared them to handle the stresses of law practice than in 2008.
- This year's respondents were more likely than last year's respondents to report that guest lectures and class discussions were effective means of engaging in ethical reflection.

These results remained significant when institutional differences such as law school affiliation, enrollment size, and selectivity were controlled for in the analysis. It is promising to observe that students are devoting more attention to their ethical and professional development. Class discussions may have been enriched by the high-profile economic, legal, and ethical dramas that have played out during the past year. In addition, students appear to have had ample opportunity to reflect on their professional development through experiential learning and practice-oriented settings in 2009. Despite the economic impact on job opportunities for new lawyers, survey responses indicate that in 2009 students had or expected to have just as much professional experience, including paid legal work, externships and internships, and pro bono activities, as students from prior survey administrations.

"LSSSE has become a valuable resource for legal education precisely because it provides the kind of feedback that law schools need in order to enhance the achievement of their core educational mission."

-William M. Sullivan, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

b Combines the following response options: small private firms (fewer than 10 attorneys), medium private firms (10 to 50 attorneys), large private firms (more than 50 attorneys).

Using LSSSE Data

LSSSE provides information that faculty, staff, and others can use almost immediately to improve the quality of the law school experience. This section section offers a sampling of different applications and interventions based on engagement results.

Conduct a Rigorous Self-Assessment

LSSSE data quantify some aspects of legal education that can be difficult to measure. For law schools preparing an accreditation self-study or gearing up for a site visit, student engagement results that reveal dimensions of quality are invaluable. Administrators at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa School of Law participated in LSSSE 2009 to prepare its self-study process this year. Schools that are a few years away from an accreditation review may wish to collect several years' worth of LSSSE data in order to chart trends and measure improvement. With three years of data in hand, Hamline University School of Law had a number of data points to guide its process this past year. The self-study committee, which included faculty, staff, and students, performed a critical review of the results. Hamline also shares its results annually with faculty as part of its strategic plan for consistent educational improvement. As part of a large intrauniversity self-assessment project, The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law analyzed and reported on its LSSSE data. Results were also included in a ten-year regional accreditation review.

Make the Data Work for You

The ability to benchmark your law school's performance against schools of similar size, mission, affiliation, or geographical location is one benefit of a large national survey like LSSSE. To provide national comparisons, LSSSE asks the same questions of all of the tens of thousands of students completing the survey in a given year. Some schools may wish to link their LSSSE results with information about issues of particular importance at their law school. Incorporating existing data with the LSSSE data creates a richer dataset. For example, a school that wants to know more about students' first-year experience could circulate a short questionnaire and merge those results into the findings. Concord Law School is considering this option to learn more about its unique distance education program.

The University of Dayton School of Law is using this approach to incorporate student level employment statistics and student bar pass statistics into their LSSSE data files for two years. In doing so, Dayton will be able to connect various measures of

student engagement to more traditional outcomes measures. Administrators will be able to determine whether students who report higher levels of engagement during law school in various areas are more successful on the bar exam, and whether they are more likely to be employed following graduation.

Schools may also elect to form a consortium with other law schools in order to add questions to the survey and receive comparative data for those additional items. Among the schools that have exercised this option are Capital University School of Law, Campbell University, Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law, Charleston School of Law, Denver University Sturm College of Law, Golden Gate University School of Law, Michigan State University College of Law, and Whittier Law School.

Inform New Initiatives

Knowing more about how students spend their time, and how they feel about various aspects of their law school experience, can be instructive for documenting the effect of certain programs and initiatives. Developing new programs that respond to the student experience is easier done with data in hand.

Hamline University School of Law is using its engagement data to inform new programming initiatives for mentoring and professional development. Administrators at Hamline used the results to assess students' perceptions of student services and out-of-class learning experiences. They then cross-referenced student perceptions with other measures of quality in those areas, and the results were integrated into program planning efforts. In future years, Hamline will be able to use past data as a benchmark to measure the effect of these new initiatives.

Start the Discussion

A first step toward school-wide improvement is to involve stakeholders in the discussion. Faculty and administrators can use the results immediately to impact classroom teaching strategies and school-wide services. The John Marshall Law School in Chicago is sharing all its LSSSE findings with the entire faculty. Professors are keen to know more about the student experience at John Marshall in the context of similar schools. In addition to a lunch-time presentation to the whole faculty, LSSSE staff provided in-depth training for a small committee of educators tasked with taking the results further.



One way to get the discussion started is to customize the generic LSSSE PowerPoint using data from your own institution. The presentation aims to familiarize new users with engagement data and LSSSE's research foundation and provide an overview of your school's results. Vermont Law School used the template to share its first year of data with the faculty. Stetson University College of Law also uses the PowerPoint to give the faculty an annual update on some of the basic LSSSE findings.

The results are also meaningful to alumni and governing boards, along with current and prospective students. The University of British Columbia Faculty of Law distributes an executive summary of the findings to its board of governors. Santa Clara University School of Law makes the data available to all current students via its intranet site. Florida Coastal School of Law shares results with perspective students to help them learn more about the student experience at Coastal.

Setting Goals for Improvement

Identifying survey items that comport with high-priority issues at your law school is an excellent way to call attention to the value of student engagement to law school performance. At Florida Coastal School of Law, administrators identified key mission-relevant questions with the goal of improving scores for those items over the next few years. Coastal is working to develop a strategy to improve the quality of their programs in these areas and will monitor its progress by administering LSSSE annually.

Phoenix School of Law and Charlotte School of Law are evaluating their performance by developing composite scores of survey items. Grouping responses to subsets of items that deal with a similar theme into a scale gives the administration a snapshot of how well the school is performing in the respective area. This approach is particularly helpful for comparing results from several years. For example, it may be overwhelming to look at eight separate survey items all related to student-faculty interaction. By combining all eight items into one score, administrators can quickly determine when comparing several years' worth of data whether student-faculty interaction is increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable over time.

Outreach Services

LSSSE staff members have visited schools around the country to conduct workshops for various groups and to facilitate school-specific data interpretation and analyses.

LSSSE Users Workshops

User workshops allow faculty and administrators an opportunity to learn more about how they can use LSSSE results at their law school. Workshop participants gain important insight into student engagement and research on teaching and learning in law school. In addition, LSSSE analysts share a strategy for interpreting and analyzing the data. Participants work through a *Law School Report* and several sample analyses to give schools ideas and models to employ with their own results. Presentations from previous Users workshops are posted to the LSSSE Web site, www.lssse.iub.edu/workshop_presentations.

School Visits and Consultations

Schools ready to probe more deeply into the different patterns of experiences of various groups of their students may wish to plan a strategy session or one-on-one training at their campus. LSSSE staff members are available to visit participating law schools and discuss the data in more detail. Often such conversations lead to instructive discoveries about differences in the data among subpopulations of students, or correlations between student engagement in a given area and desirable learning outcomes. Contact LSSSE at lssse@indiana.edu to schedule a visit to your school.

User Resources

LSSSE has developed key print resources for LSSSE users.

Working with LSSSE Data: A User's Guide

Similar to an instructor's manual, the User's Guide provides a step-by-step strategy for understanding your LSSSE *Law School Report*. The guide provides a detailed description of each section of the *Report*, along with definitions of key statistical terms. You can download copies of the User's Guide from the LSSSE Web site, www.lssse.iub.edu/pdf/Users_Guide.pdf.

Accreditation Toolkit

The Accreditation Toolkit offers guidelines for incorporating LSSSE data into accreditation self-studies. Further, the Toolkit provides a map that aligns specific items from the LSSSE instrument to ABA accreditation standards. Find the Accreditation Toolkit on the LSSSE Web site, www.lssse.iub.edu/pdf/LSSSE_Accreditation_Toolkit.pdf.



LSSSE is keen to assist law schools in translating the data to action. Learning the fundamentals through regional workshops and user guides has helped many schools develop an analysis strategy. We're eager to do more, and schools looking to take their results further should contact LSSSE to schedule a school visit or consultation. During a one-on-one conversation, we can help schools better understand their data in context or develop an analysis strategy that is tailored to institutional goals or assessment efforts.

During registration, take a moment to browse the LSSSE Web site. The newly designed site features case studies from veteran LSSSE users, along with tips and guides on using and understanding the results. Download syntax that will allow you to quickly merge data files from multiple LSSSE administrations. See more results from the 2009 national administration. View presentations from conferences and workshops. We hope that the new design allows schools to better access resources that will enhance their LSSSE experience and help make meaning of engagement data.

LSSSE is always looking for more information about how participating law schools use their engagement data to inform new initiatives and take intentional steps toward improvement. We encourage you to let us know how you are using the data at your law school. With whom are you sharing results? What have you learned about the student experience? What more could we do to help you translate the data to action? By sharing your experiences with other institutions through our workshops and publications, we can help to advance assessment and improvement efforts in law schools across the country.

We are glad to play a role in facilitating the efforts of legal educators to provide the highest quality educational experience for their students. Legal education will continue to evolve in ways that best address changing needs of the profession. As that process unfolds, we hope that legal educators use LSSSE data to identify areas for improvement, set goals, and measure progress. Together, we will work toward a bright future in legal education.

Supporting Materials

Resources

A.B.A. Standards for Approval of Law Schools. Standard 301, Interpretation $301-1\ (2009)$.

R. Lawrence Dessem (quoting Chickering & Gamson), *Principle 5:* Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task, 49 J. LEGAL EDUC. 430, 430 (1999).

David Dominguez, Principle 2: Good Practice Encourages Cooperation Among Students, 49 J. LEGAL EDUC. 386, 386 (1999).

Jonathan D. Glater, Billable Hours Giving Ground at Law Firms, New York Times, Jan. 29, 2009.

William Henderson & Andrew Morris, What Ratings Don't Say About Costly Choices, Nat'l L. J., April 14, 2008.

Nathan Koppel & Ashby Jones, 'Billable Hour' Under Attack, WALL STREET J., Aug. 24, 2009.

M. Lebrun & R. Johnstone, The Quiet (R)Evolution: Improving Student Learning in Law (1994).

Deborah Maranville, Infusing Passion and Context into the Traditional Law Curriculum Through Experiential Learning. 51 J. LEGAL EDUC. 51, 53 (2001).

Sullivan, Et. Al., Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law, Executive Summary 9 (2007).

Supporting Materials on the LSSSE Web Site

Visit LSSSE's Web site at www.lssse.iub.edu to find more detailed information on the 2009 Annual Survey and the following resources:

- Copy of the LSSSE survey instrument
- Information about all participating law schools
- Frequency reports of student responses presented by class year with comparisons based on school size, school affiliation, and the entire LSSSE 2009 cohort
- Presentations from national conferences and law school workshops
- Registration information for the LSSSE 2010 administration
- Accreditation Toolkit
- Working with LSSSE Data: A Facilitator's Guide



ALABAMA

Samford University, Cumberland School of Law Birmingham

The University of Alabama School of Law Tuscaloosa

ARIZONA

Phoenix School of Law Phoenix

ARKANSAS

University of Arkansas at Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law Little Rock

University of Arkansas School of Law Fayetteville

CALIFORNIA

California Western School of Law San Diego

Chapman University School of Law Orange

Concord Law School Los Angeles

Golden Gate University School of Law San Francisco

Loyola Law School Los Angeles

Pepperdine University School of Law Malibu

Santa Clara University School of Law Santa Clara

Southwestern Law School Los Angeles

Thomas Jefferson School of Law San Diego

University of California at Davis School of Law

School of Law

University of California at Los Angeles School of Law Los Angeles

University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law Sacramento

University of San Diego School of Law San Diego

University of San Francisco School of Law San Francisco

University of Southern California Law School

Law School Los Angeles

Whittier Law School Costa Mesa

COLORADO

University of Colorado Law School Boulder

University of Denver Sturm College of Law Denver

CONNECTICUT

Quinnipiac University School of Law Hamden

DELAWARE

Widener University School of Law Wilmington

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

American University Washington College of Law Washington

The Catholic University of America – Columbus School of Law Washington

The George Washington University Law School Washington

Georgetown University Law Center Washington

The University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law Washington

FLORIDA

Florida Coastal School of Law Jacksonville

Florida International University College of Law Miami

Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center Ft. Lauderdale

St. Thomas University School of Law Miami

Stetson University College of Law Gulfport

University of Florida, Levin College of Law Gainesville

University of Miami School of Law Coral Gables

GEORGIA

Emory University School of Law Atlanta

Georgia State University College of Law Atlanta

John Marshall Law School, Atlanta Atlanta

Mercer University Walter F. George School of Law Macon

HAWAI'I

University of Hawaiʻi at Manoa The William S. Richardson School of Law Manoa

IDAHC

University of Idaho College of Law Moscow

ILLINOIS

The John Marshall Law School Chicago

Loyola University School of Law, Chicago Chicago

Southern Illinois University School of Law Carbondale

University of Illinois College of Law Champaign

INDIANA

Indiana University Maurer School of Law – Bloomington Bloomington

Valparaiso University School of Law Valparaiso

IOWA

Drake University Law School Des Moines

KANSAS

The University of Kansas School of Law Lawrence

Washburn University School of Law Topeka

KENTUCKY

Northern Kentucky University, Salmon P. Chase College of Law Highland Heights

University of Kentucky College of Law Lexington

LOUISIANA

Louisiana State University, Paul M. Hebert Law Center Baton Rouge

Loyola University New Orleans College of Law New Orleans

Southern University Law Center Baton Rouge

MARYLAND

University of Baltimore School of Law Baltimore

University of Maryland School of Law Baltimore

MASSACHUSETTS

Harvard University Law School Cambridge

Northeastern University School of Law Boston

Suffolk University Law School Boston

Western New England College School of Law Springfield

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Ave Maria School of Law Ann Arbor

Michigan State University College of Law East Lansing

Thomas M. Cooley Law School Lansing

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law Detroit

Wayne State University Law School Detroit

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Hamline University School of Law

University of Minnesota Law School Minneapolis

University of St. Thomas School of Law Minneapolis

William Mitchell College of Law St. Paul

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Mississippi College School of Law Jackson

University of Mississippi School of Law Oxford

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Saint Louis University School of Law St. Louis

University of Missouri – Columbia School of Law Columbia

University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law Kansas City

Washington University School of Law St. Louis

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Hofstra University School of Law Hempstead

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Yeshiva University, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law New York

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Charlotte School of Law Charlotte

Duke University School of Law

Durham Elon University School of Law

Greensboro North Carolina Central University

School of Law Durham University of North Carolina

School of Law Chapel Hill Wake Forest University School of Law Winston-Salem

OHIO

Capital University Law School Columbus

Case Western Reserve University School of Law Cleveland

Cleveland State University, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law Cleveland

Ohio Northern University Pettit College of Law

The Ohio State University Michael E. Moritz College of Law Columbus

The University of Akron School of Law Akron

University of Cincinnati College of Law Cincinnati

University of Dayton School of Law Dayton

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City University School of Law Oklahoma City

The University of Oklahoma Law Center

Norman

The University of Tulsa College of Law Tulsa

OREGON

Lewis & Clark Law School Portland

University of Oregon School of Law Eugene

PENNSYLVANIA

Drexel University College of Law Philadelphia

Temple University – James E. Beasley School of Law Philadelphia

University of Pittsburgh School of Law Pittsburgh

RHODE ISLAND

Roger Williams University Bristol

SOUTH CAROLINA

Charleston School of Law Charleston

University of South Carolina School of Law Columbia

SOUTH DAKOTA

University of South Dakota School of Law Vermillion

TENNESSEE

The University of Tennessee College of Law Knoxville

Vanderbilt University School of Law Nashville

TEXAS

Baylor University School of Law Waco

St. Mary's University of San Antonio School of Law San Antonio

South Texas College of Law Houston

Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law Dallas

Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law Houston

Texas Tech University School of Law Lubbock

Texas Wesleyan University School of Law Fort Worth

University of Houston Law Center Houston

UTAH

Brigham Young University J. Reuben Clark Law School Provo

University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law Salt Lake City

VERMONT

Vermont School of Law South Royalton

VIRGINIA

Regent University School of Law Virginia Beach

William & Mary Law School Williamsburg

University of Richmond School of Law Richmond

Washington and Lee University School of Law Lexington

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Gonzaga University School of Law Spokane

Seattle University School of Law Seattle

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Winnipeg, MB University of New Brunswick – Faculty of Law Fredericton, NB

Dalhousie University, Dalhousie Law School Halifax, NS

Osgoode Hall Law School of York University Toronto, ON

Queen's University – Faculty of Law Kingston, ON

Université d'Ottawa –

Faculté de droit, Section de droit civil Ottawa, ON

University of Ottawa – Faculty of Law, Common Law Section Ottawa, ON

University of Toronto – Faculty of Law Toronto, ON

University of Western Ontario – Faculty of Law London, ON

University of Windsor – Faculty of Law Windsor, ON

McGill University - Faculty of Law Montreal, QC

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